

Photoshop Elements Tutorial for Beginners, making cookie cutter backgrounds. by Rande Hanson

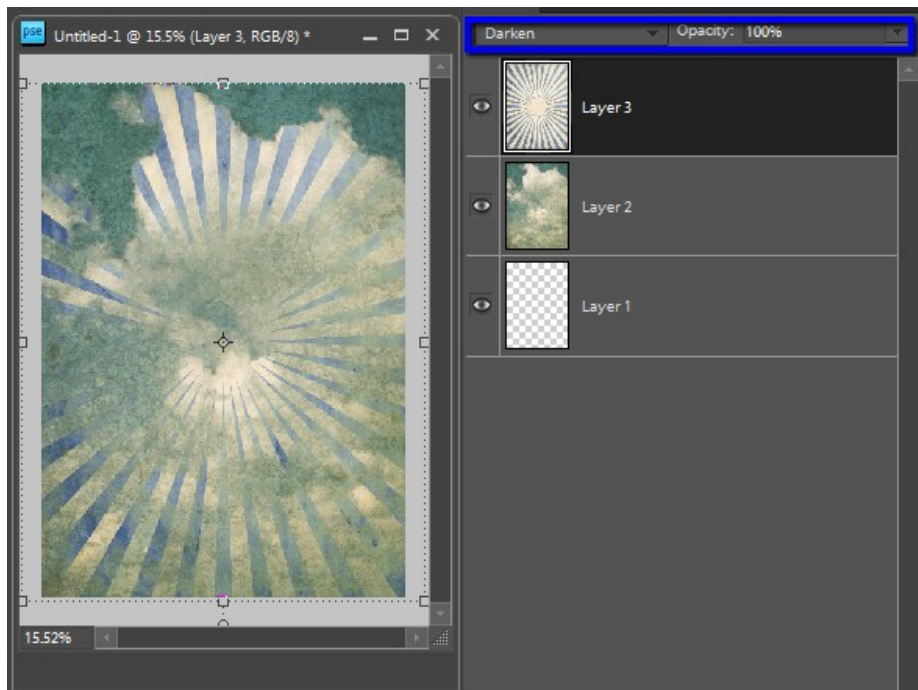
Disclaimer. There are several ways, and several tools to add shapes. As you become more experienced, you will want to try them. For this tutorial, we will cover just one of the ways a beginner can successfully add a shape to create whimsical a background scene.

Create a new blank file, 5 x 7, 300dpi.

Open you texture background images. I am using one of the clouds texture, and a starburst background.

Make the clouds image active, and drag the layers palette icon to the new blank file. Next make the starburst file active and drag that image to to the file. It should be layer 3. Reposition and/or resize each layer to fit the new file.

In the layers palette, make the starburst layer active. Go to the blending and try a few different ones, I ended up selecting the darken blending mode. Your work area should look similar to screenshot below.



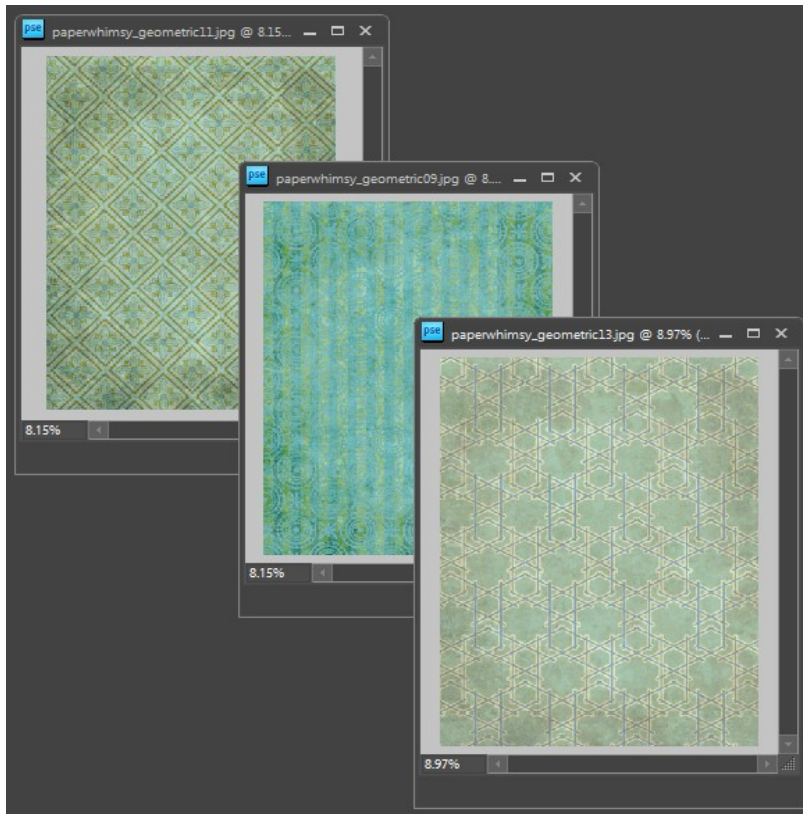
These layers can be adjusted for color and brightness later as we add more layers.

For the hills, use three different patterned background images. At this point, if you don't have coordinating colors, most backgrounds can be color adjusted when added to the new file.

Now for the fun stuff.

Open the three pattern files.

Note: When selecting the patterned backgrounds, you will want to pick patterns that compliment each. Again, the colors can be adjusted later. For this tutorial I selected geometric jpg 11, 09, and 13.

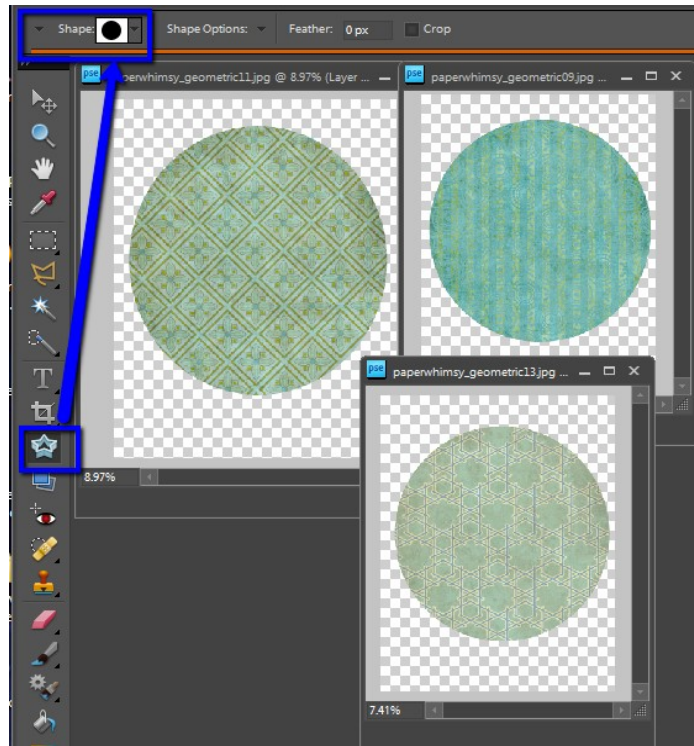


Select one of the backgrounds files to make it active. In your toolbar along the left hand side, you should see star symbol that looks like a cookie cutter. Select that tool. Next go the toolbar across the top, and you should see a shape drop down menu. Click on that drop down menu. It will open up the different cookie cutter shapes. There are double arrows to the top right of the opened box, click on the arrows, and if you want to see all the shapes available, click on All Elements Shapes. Using the scroll bar, go through the shapes until you find a solid black circle and double click on the symbol.

Next to define the circle in our background. I have found if start in the upper left area of the background, and drag diagonally to lower right, I can get a good circle shape. Just click in upper left and hold the mouse key. You should see the outline of the circle as you drag the mouse down and across. When you have a circle defined that you are happy with, release the mouse key, and click the green check to commit.

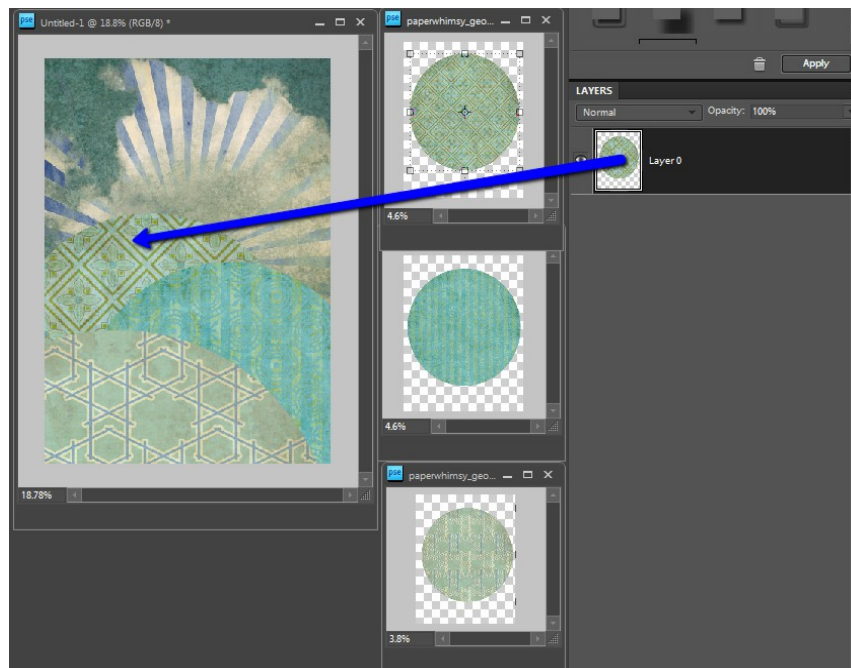
Note: For this tutorial, please don't worry about having an exact circle shape, just a general circle/oval shape.

Now do the same steps for the other two patterned backgrounds.



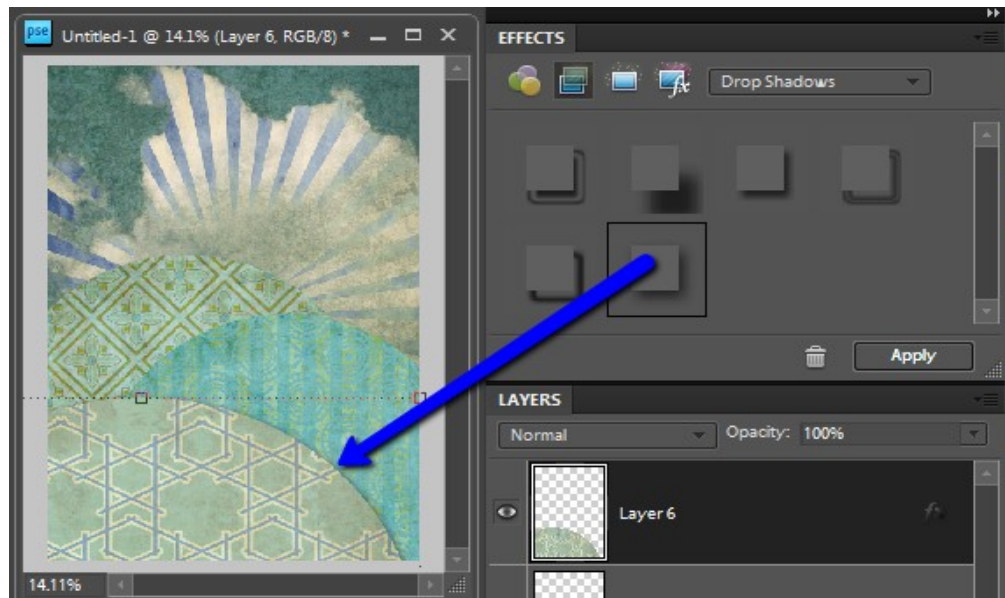
Next you will make one of the patterned circles active, and click on the layers palette icon, and drag it to the new file. You will probably have to resize and reposition the circle. Just move to a general area, as this will be the farthest hill in the new background, and can be moved later when the other hills are added.

Now move the other circles to the new file. Your new file will look something like the file below.



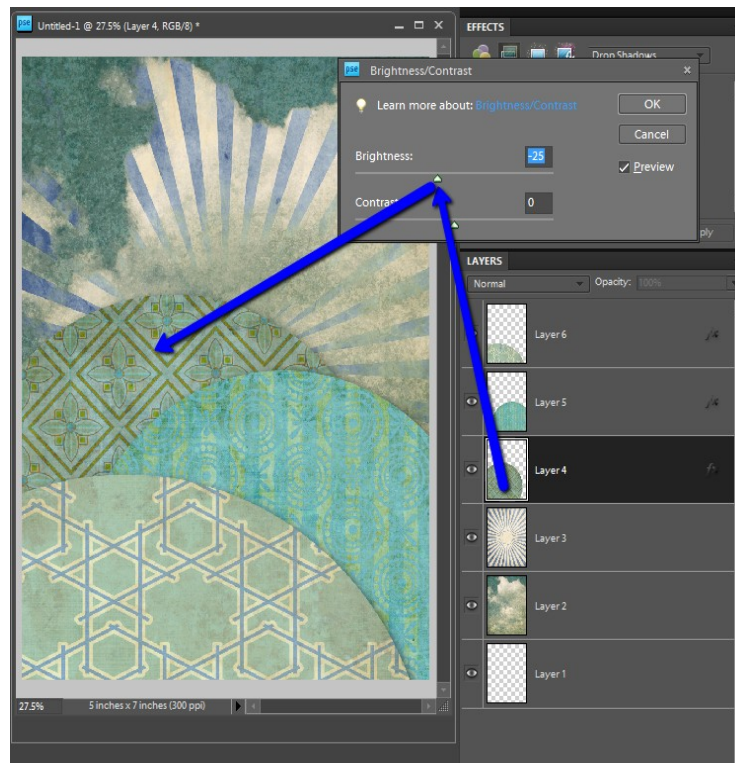
This is your basic background. Now there are many options to better define the hills. I will show you a few things I like to play with.

For each of the circle layers, I applied a drop shadow effect. I selected the soft edge drop shadow effect. Be sure the circle layer you want to add the effect to is selected in the layers palette. Just double click the effect, or OR click once and click the apply.



Do this for all the circle layers. You can see how this gives the hills a little more depth.

At this point you can make the color and brightness adjustments, to make the collage have even more depth. You would find these adjustments under the top drop menu named Enhance, adjust lighting, adjust lighting. I decreased the lightness of the back most circle layer to -25.



You can also change the color hue under the Enhance drop down menu, select Adjust color, Adjust hue/saturation.

When you are happy with the background, you can save your new file, or continue to add elements.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

